

KOREAN AIRLINE
INCIDENT

GUMBEL: It's been nearly a year since a Soviet missile destroyed Korean Airlines flight 007, killing all 269 people on board. Well, now an article in The Nation magazine raises some serious questions about the U.S. role in that tragedy. The article contends that at the very least, the U.S. intelligence community suffered an unprecedented breakdown that night for failing to warn the KAL pilot on both his errors in navigation and the threat posed by the Soviet jets. Sen. Patrick Leahy is a member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and he joins us this morning from our studios in Washington. Good morning, Senator. SEN. PATRICK LEAHY (D-Ver., member of Senate Select Committee): Good morning, Bryant.

GUMBEL: You've had a chance, I'm sure, to read the David Pearson article in The Nation, contending the U.S. officials knew the plane was off course, yet did nothing about it. Your reaction. LEAHY: Well, I've read the article and I've gone back and reviewed all the evidence that we had available to us in the intelligence committee and, in fact did it again over this past weekend. The article is a fascinating compendium of coincidences and hypothesis, but it comes out false in the end. It really makes no sense at all. It suggests, or actually, pretty much states that we sent the Korean Airline plane over there on a spy mission. What it never faces up to is that there is nothing at all that the Korean airline could have done on a spy mission, assuming that that's what was gonna be done, assuming that we outfitted it with all kinds of cameras and electronic equipment and everything else, it still would have got nothing that we already had.

GUMBEL: I don't think he was suggesting necessarily that it was on a spy mission so much as he was suggesting, well let me show you something from the interview, so much as he was suggesting that as the plane was lost, and the Soviets scrambled after it, the U.S. might reap some kind of intelligence bonanza. Let me show you this bit of tape from the interview we did with David Pearson last Thursday. PEARSON: The best response to that is precisely what occurred, one of the largest intelligence coups in history occurred that night.

GUMBEL: What kind of an intelligence coup? PEARSON: By that I mean U.S. signals intelligence and radar equipment monitored, monitored the Soviets turning on virtually

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